

NATIONAL TAXPAYER ADVOCATE VAL OVESON PLANS TO LEAVE IRS, RETURN TO PRIVATE SECTOR

WASHINGTON – Following the successful start-up of the new Taxpayer Advocate Service, W. Val Oveson plans to step down as National Taxpayer Advocate this fall and continue his career in the private sector.

Oveson, who was appointed on Sept. 1, 1998, oversaw the transformation of the National Taxpayer Advocate's office to reflect the expanded powers and responsibilities granted by Congress in the IRS Restructuring and Reform Act. Following the 1998 law, the office took on a greater role assisting taxpayers in tax disputes with the IRS, championing taxpayer's rights and providing recommendations for improving tax legislation.

"Val spearheaded the effort to build the Taxpayer Advocate Service into a new organization devoted to helping taxpayers," IRS Commissioner Charles O. Rossotti said. "Thanks to his leadership, taxpayers have an easier way of resolving problems they can't fix through normal IRS channels."

"While Val's skills will be missed, he leaves behind an organization ready to play an active role helping taxpayers in the new, reorganized IRS," Rossotti said.

Oveson plans to return to Utah, where he will pursue private professional interests. Before arriving in Washington, Oveson held a variety of public and private sector roles in Utah, including serving as the state's lieutenant governor and chairman of the Utah State Tax Commission.

While at the IRS, Oveson oversaw fundamental changes in the National Taxpayer Advocate's office:

- For the first time, each state has Taxpayer Advocates reporting directly to the National Taxpayer Advocate. The move to this nationwide network added more independence. Previously, Taxpayer Advocates reported to District Directors.
- This group of 74 Taxpayer Advocates was reorganized as part of the Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS). In all, TAS has more than 2,000 employees, including caseworkers, dedicated to helping taxpayers work out problems.

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- The National Taxpayer Advocate also prepares a new, expanded annual report to Congress. This report fills a unique niche at the IRS. The National Taxpayer Advocate office prepares its own independent summary of the 20 most serious problems encountered by taxpayers, legislative recommendations for improvements and assessments of IRS efforts to improve customer service and reduce taxpayer burden.

For more information about the Taxpayer Advocate Service, visit the IRS web site at www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/ind_info/advocate.html . If taxpayers have been unable to resolve a problem through normal IRS channels, they can contact the Taxpayer Advocate Service's toll-free help line at 1-877-777-4778.

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